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221. Memorandum of Conversation¹

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SUBJECT

Meeting Between Secretary Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko

PARTICIPANTS

U.S.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz

Undersecretary for Political Affairs Lawrence S. Eagleburger

Ambassador to the USSR Arthur A. Hartman

Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richart Burt

Cyril Muromcew, Interpreter (Notetaker)

USSR

Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko

Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi M. Korniyenko

Ambassador to U.S. Anatoly F. Dobrynin

U.S.A. Department (MFA) Deputy Chief Mr. V.F. Isakov

Gromyko's Senior Assistant Mr. Makarov

Victor Sukhodrev, Interpreter (Notetaker)

After brief exchange of pleasantries, Gromyko said that he would like to continue the exchange of views if there [Page 738] were no objections from the Secretary. Gromyko would like to start with a discussion of the Middle East because the situation there was of interest to both, but he would not attempt to weigh the importance each side attached to this issue. Nevertheless, the question was of great importance and he would like to discuss it.

The Secretary replied that indeed the Middle East was an important question. However, the Secretary would like to make a counter suggestion and present a list of five items, which could be discussed in any order, time permitting. But first, he wanted to speak about the general relations between the two powers. The views held by the two sides were not always similar, but he

wanted to find a way to improve the U.S.–Soviet relationship by discussing questions of mutual interest and identifying areas where the two sides could constructively work together. Ambassador Dobrynin and Mr. Eagleburger had already done some preliminary work.

In this spirit, the Secretary said he would like to present the following list:

1. Under a general heading he would like to put the human rights issue on the agenda. This was an issue of great importance to the United States.
2. Regional issues. This would be a discussion of preventive measures to be taken, especially in areas of the world where things could get worse.
3. Regional trouble spots such as the Middle East.
4. Arms reduction, specifically how to make possible headway on a test ban treaty.
5. Areas of parallel interest, such as nuclear non-proliferation.

Gromyko had no objections but, since the question of the Middle East was “in the air” all the time he would start with the Middle East and then discuss the proposed list, noting that other questions might arise during the discussion which might not fit into the Secretary’s suggested framework. However, Gromyko believed that he and the Secretary were not confined to a rigid bureaucratic framework and could discuss any other issues. This, in his view, would be the proper approach. In other words, other questions might be squeezed into the general framework.

The Secretary replied that he was ready to give Gromyko his views on the problems of the Middle East and what to do about them; then he would like to hear Gromyko’s views too.

These were difficult matters to resolve. It would be necessary to find a way to fulfill the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people which would be fully consistent with the security needs of Israel. The Secretary saw many dimensions to [Page 739] that problem. Many proposals were expressed by the President in his statement on September 1,² and if Gromyko were not familiar with them, the Secretary would be glad to give him a copy. The U.S. side believed that a central problem now was the situation in Lebanon, which was complex and distressing. Lebanon was a country that became an innocent bystander in a larger conflict, plagued from 1975 on by the existence of a state within a state and incapable of governing itself. People got killed, wounded, and displaced. Previous disputes and threats to Israel’s security, especially from the southern part of Lebanon, had led to present conflict, death and destruction. Now there were problems with the PLO evacuation and recently, with the massacre.³ The problem was to get the Syrian, PLO and Israeli forces out of the country and to do everything possible to establish a free and independent government and to start reconstruction of the country. At the same time, there was the parallel need to make progress in the Middle East process. This process would be possible with the cooperation of every party involved, but the heart of the problem was the reconciliation of the people and making the legitimate rights of the Palestinians compatible with the interests of Israel. The President’s speech on September 1 was an effort to advance this process within the framework of the Camp David Accord.

A related issue was the Iran/Iraq conflict. The U.S. was determined to remain neutral but held the view that the former territorial boundaries were to be respected. The U.S. was for a ceasefire and supported UN Resolutions pertinent to that situation.

Gromyko replied that there was no need to say more about U.S. and Soviet interests in the Middle East. It was sufficient to look at the map to see that this whole region was adjacent to the Soviet Union and any situation in that region was of no little concern to the Soviet Union from the point of view of security. The Secretary should not think that Gromyko was regarding this matter from a distance. Over a number of years the Soviet Union was aware of an American attempt to ease the Soviet Union out of any participation leading to a solution to the Middle East problem. No one should believe that the Soviet Union could be

left out of the Middle East solution. One must proceed from the premise that neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union can be excluded from an examination of Middle East problems. If anyone suggested that the Soviet Union could simply be [Page 740] crossed out when talking about the Middle East, the Secretary should not heed him.

Gromyko continued to say that the U.S. should not fear Soviet participation in a Middle East settlement. He stressed that the Soviet Union was in favor of the existence of Israel as a state because many years ago Washington and Moscow proposed simultaneously that Israel should be established as an independent state while it was still under British mandate. Gromyko recalled that in 1947 he was heading the Soviet delegation to the UN where he never wavered through the difficult negotiations and stood fast before extremist Arab factions who did not want Israel to exist. Neither Israel nor the U.S. should fear the presence of the Soviet Union in that area. Why not sit down together, think together and perhaps do something together to bring about a real settlement? What has happened in the Mideast was not in accordance with plans and intentions of those who wanted to establish an independent Arab/Palestinian along with an independent Jewish state. The Soviet Union wanted Israel to be a normal peace-loving state and not an aggressive one. The Soviet Union was not worried about Israel as a state, but about the direction of its policy. Israel seemed to see aggression as the way of its future expansion. To justify their actions the Israelis referred to the Bible, invoked ancient history but forgot that the Bible dealt with different times and that these references might not benefit Israel in the long run. He added that the Soviet Union wanted Israel to exist and to live in peace and maintain normal relations with Arab countries. He knew that the Arabs wanted peace with Israel—he was not talking about Arab extremists which he mentioned earlier, but recent acts perpetrated by Israel caused dismay, indignation and even anger among the people of the Soviet Union. It was not long ago that the Soviet people had saved European Jews from annihilation at the hands of Hitler's invaders. Now the whole world could see the Jews assuming some characteristics of Nazi Germany. At the same time, Gromyko would not be afraid to look for a common language and for a role for the Soviet Union to resolve the problem. What Israel had recently perpetrated had to be corrected—the dead could not be resurrected but at least Israeli forces should be withdrawn from the occupied areas. He could not be sure that the Israelis would not do something similar or worse and start a chain of events that neither the Secretary nor Gromyko would want to see.

In view of the above, Gromyko wanted the Secretary to take a broad view of the situation, a view from a high tower to get things into perspective. The Soviet point of view on the Camp David Accords was well known. A broader view of the situation should be taken. The area is a "warehouse of explosives". No one wanted such a development—neither the Soviet Union nor the United States, nor any other country.

Gromyko then turned to the Fez meeting. The Fez principles were reasonable and could be the basis of a settlement, [Page 741] and were not in opposition to certain Soviet principles. As for Washington's plans and the statements by the President, the most acute problem of the area was not mentioned, namely—an autonomous Palestinian state. How viable could such a plan be? Such a plan would not work, was not realistic and could not be implemented. A plan that would not provide for a Palestinian state and also for an independent state of Israel was not viable.

As for the procedural or organizational aspects, Gromyko said that the Arab proposal to raise the issue in the Security Council was acceptable to him, even if Washington did not like it, and any other Arab state could participate in it. What was needed was a qualified vote in the Security Council. Gromyko's idea was that in spite of the proceedings in the Security Council, the United States, the Soviet Union and some Arab states could seek in parallel an effective solution of the problem. What he had in mind was a conference of countries such as Israel, Syria, Jordan, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and perhaps some other countries wishing to participate. This would not be an attempt to create a mini-General Assembly. There would be no imposition by majority vote in such a conference, which would be a fresh forum where new ideas to reach an agreement could be tried. It was not by chance that after WW II some peace conferences were held with interested countries. In his view, Arab countries would be willing to recognize Israel—after a withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab lands, but Israel would feel safer too. Would the U.S. be willing to guarantee such an arrangement? Perhaps the Soviet Union and other countries would do it too. This was no "evil eye" that the U.S. need fear. Perhaps if Washington would cast a fresh glance at the issue, some people there might be willing to think about it.

No matter what, Gromyko continued, the end of military action in the area would not be the end of the problem. Problems would continue. Today, Israel was powerful, but would Israel want to remain at war for the next 100 years? Would Israel be equally strong in say, 10, 15 or 20 years?

The Secretary said that he wanted in his comment to combine substantive and procedural aspects.

1. In Lebanon, the substantive problem was how to get the foreign forces out.
2. Beyond this, to encourage the formation of a stable central Lebanese government and in the process to stimulate reconstruction and redevelopment.

Currently, the problem was how to deal with Israeli, Syrian and PLO forces. The U.S. was using its persuasive powers to get the Israelis to withdraw their forces. The current withdrawal from all of Beirut and from the airport was a [Page 742] "downpayment." At the same time, the U.S. was talking to the Syrians though there was no direct way to talk with the PLO. The Soviet Union had provided the PLO with Soviet weapons; therefore, the influence that the Soviet Union had with the PLO and the Syrians could be used constructively to encourage their withdrawal from Lebanon. Meanwhile, the U.S. would put up funds for humanitarian purposes and for the reconstruction of Lebanon. Government funds would be needed to rebuild the infrastructure, such as roads, etc., while private capital could be attracted to Lebanon for other forms of development. In other words, a stable climate was needed to attract capital. The Soviet Union could help persuade the Syrians and the PLO to leave Lebanon so that reconstruction could begin. In this regard, the Secretary noted disturbing reports that armed Palestinians had returned to northern Lebanon.

Gromyko interrupted to ask if we meant the withdrawal of PLO civilians? *The Secretary* replied that he had been referring to PLO fighters. Gromyko replied that all the fighters had pulled out. *The Secretary* said that the fighters were dispersed but that there were still a substantial number of them in northern Lebanon, according to reliable information. Those from Beirut were returning to that area. Gromyko replied that he did not believe it. *The Secretary* repeated that the PLO must pull out.

The Secretary then turned to the Palestinian issue, noting that Gromyko had charged that President Reagan had bypassed the issue of a Palestinian state. The Secretary explained that the President had examined this idea, but had specifically rejected it. He believed it more promising to have a Palestinian affiliation with Jordan; such a plan was more workable. The Secretary remembered travelling through the area a few years ago and found it rather barren. It was difficult for the Secretary to imagine how it could work as an independent entity. The President also believed that an independent sovereign state with its own independent armed forces and the ability to use these forces would be a destabilizing factor in that area. He believed that fewer not more arms were needed there. According to the President's plan, this would be a territory to be governed together with Jordan; it would be a demilitarized area that Israel would not have to worry about.

The Secretary remembered travelling to Israel right after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and he felt that the natural disposition of the Israelis was to have peace in the area. He pointed out that the Israelis were willing to give up the Sinai desert to achieve peace. At any rate, the Camp David forum did prove successful in establishing peaceful relations between Israel and Egypt. In other words, the Camp David Accords were an effective framework and no different forum was needed now, only the [Page 743] emergence of the willingness on the part of the Arab leaders, King Hussein, West Bank Palestinians and others to help resolve an issue between the Palestinian people and Israel. The Secretary noted that Camp David contained explicit mention of legitimate Palestinian rights and talked of "self-governing" authority for the West Bank. Thus, the basics were up to Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians to work out.

Gromyko replied that Camp David provided for self-government for the Palestinians, which meant that they could vote on the West Bank and in Gaza for this or that Mayor or perhaps a sheriff. But, he added with a smile, the basic issue was the creation of an independent and autonomous state. He believed that the concept of self-government suffered from too many different interpretations. It was one thing to live in your own house, but something else to be able to vote for mayor, a judge, or a policeman. Gromyko then asked whether if the Syrians leave, will the Israelis pull out? He then quickly said that he didn't

know Syrian plans, and that he had not discussed it with the Syrians and somebody would have to talk to the Syrians about it because these were Syrian troops that they were talking about. He asked the Secretary to give him his clear view on the issue because he only wanted a better understanding of the problem and that the Secretary should not draw any conclusions from the question.

The Secretary said that perhaps they had found something they could agree on noting that certain words have a certain meaning and connotation in the Middle East. As for self-determination, the U.S. was in favor of it. As for self-government, the U.S. envisioned more than just voting for your own sheriff. The issue was the environment: social and economic life and the ability to control these factors. That's how the President's plan would work. This would not include a military establishment, which would be destabilizing in that area. The thinking was that the territory in question could be best set up in association with Jordan. Such an arrangement would give better economic scope to the Palestinians.

As for PLO fighters in north Lebanon, the Secretary continued, the evidence of their presence there was clear. In time, they might lay down arms and become part of the population, but that was not clear. As for Israeli intentions concerning withdrawal, the Secretary himself had put that question to Foreign Minister Shamir, who had said, once the Syrians were out, that Israel would leave all of Lebanon and not occupy any part of it. The President would hold Israel to its word. The U.S. would hope that conditions could be created to allow this to happen before the end of the year. But the Secretary noted that it was important to recognize how the current situation came about. Southern Lebanon was an area with many PLO fighters who harassed Israelis in the northern part of the country. This constituted a base against northern Israel. This was the [Page 744] reason why the Israelis moved into Lebanon. Israel needed an assurance, as the role that UNIFIL⁴ is meant to play has shown, that this area would not again be used to harass Israel. Some kind of security arrangements, like UNIFIL, would be necessary. In short, the answer to Gromyko's question, was a "pretty good yes," the U.S. intention was to push hard to make the Israelis pull out of Lebanon and to do it promptly before they had a chance to settle in.

Gromyko then asked the Secretary whether it would be useful to agree on some basic consultations between the U.S. and Soviet representatives at some agreed level to discuss the Middle East. There would be no time frame at this point, but Gromyko would propose about one month to establish such an exchange and asked whether the Secretary would agree to it or whether such an approach was taboo.

The Secretary replied that he and Gromyko were exchanging views on the Middle East right now and there was no reason why this should not be continued. Perhaps such meetings could take place in Moscow or in Washington. The U.S. had a very good Ambassador and so did the Soviet Union and such an exchange of views could be set up periodically, whenever something of importance had to be discussed. The Secretary felt that since the Soviet Ambassador could see many people in Washington, he would hope that Hartman could see Gromyko and others when necessary. He concluded that, having such outstanding Ambassadors, we should let them handle such exchanges.

Gromyko replied that if the Secretary was uneasy about a special exchange of views, there was no need for it, and both sides could agree through their Ambassadors to conduct such exchanges, perhaps on a rotating basis. When necessary and the sides were agreeable, some special talks might also be arranged. In summary, the Soviet Union wanted peace in the Middle East without diminishing lawful interests of Israel in defending its right to exist, but was strictly against Israel's aggressive policy and the trend towards annexation. The USSR could not be shut out of Middle East diplomacy. He assured the Secretary that the Soviet side would be ready for an exchange of views.

The Secretary wanted to raise a question related to a different part of the Middle East, namely the Iran/Iraq conflict, which had turned into a substantial war. This conflict seemed to be rooted in Shiite fundamentalism that was spreading through the region and could spill over into other areas. The U.S. was determined to remain neutral and had called for a ceasefire and the observance of national boundaries. The U.S. was not supplying arms to either side. However, that war remained a [Page 745] matter of concern to the United States, and we would like to hear Soviet views.

Gromyko replied that the Soviet Union maintained contacts with Iraq, but less so with Iran because of the complex situation there. The Soviet Union considered the current Iran–Iraq conflict to be an absurd war for both countries and that it was time to end it. Gromyko could not understand why it started in the first place. It would be helpful if the U.S. would act similarly and advise Iraq and “your old bosom friend Iran” to put an end to it. However, as he saw it, it would be a gross miscalculation on the part of the United States if, with reference to the danger from Iran, the U.S. decided to install military facilities in an Arab country adjacent to it. There was no need to do it, such a move would only make matters worse.

The Secretary replied that the Persian Gulf was of vital importance to the United States and that any spillover of the fundamentalist movement, as recently seen in the coup attempt in Bahrain, would have grave consequences. The U.S. was concerned not only about Iran or Iraq, but also about the possibility of a spillover into Bahrain, Kuwait, or Saudi Arabia. The U.S. would have to look to its interests. The Secretary took note of Gromyko’s statement, but wanted him to know how important the Gulf was to the United States.

The Secretary then turned to the matter of human rights, which was at the very top of his list and a matter of great concern in the United States. On his way to the meeting, the Secretary was handed a paper by some New York Congressmen;⁵ he hadn’t looked at it yet but it probably dealt with emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union. He remembered that when he was in the Nixon administration, he had a quiet exchange with the Soviet side concerning an increase in emigrants from the Soviet Union. An increase came about and this was welcomed. We would welcome some information about the 15 names on the list which Ambassador Hartman handed to Korniyenko after the first meeting. These were persons claiming U.S. citizenship who wanted to return to the United States; most of them were elderly, and one had been trying to emigrate since 1947. This was a long time. Resolution of questions such as these would do much to improve U.S.–Soviet relations. Little things in this area, he added, could make a big difference.

The Secretary said that he and Gromyko should discuss such matters quietly in order to improve U.S./Soviet relations. Shcharansky was another case to be discussed. His wife was planning to demonstrate in front of the Soviet Embassy; he was a sick man and cases of this nature were bound to catch attention in the United States. When discussing arms [Page 746] reductions earlier on, the Secretary had touched on the Helsinki Final Act and activities on the part of the Soviet Union which appeared not to be in accord with the provision of that agreement. The Secretary wanted to point out very emphatically, without engaging in polemics, that little things could make a big difference in mutual relations. The U.S. would welcome discussions to ease existing strains. There were ways of doing it without interfering in the domestic affairs of the Soviet Union and some thought should be given to how to bring it about.

Gromyko replied that the deterioration of relations had created an atmosphere that was less conducive to resolving emigration problems from the Soviet Union for certain people. Gromyko felt that U.S. policy was entirely responsible. Gromyko quickly added that he was not going to engage in polemics either, but that somehow they got into the discussion. As for the list received from the U.S., concerning people who were claiming to be U.S. citizens, the Soviets believed them to be Soviet citizens. But he was ready to look at them to determine whether or not they could be classified as U.S. citizens. This could be done objectively and he was prepared to look into this matter. The other list definitely dealt with Soviet citizens wishing to go to Israel and not to the United States. The Soviet Union could not look at such a request. These were not people wishing to go to the United States, but to Israel, and Gromyko wanted to be clear that the treatment of such a category of people cannot be revised. He remembered that the Secretary kept referring to the Helsinki Final Act. A government should, if possible, benevolently review such cases, and act benevolently, if possible. It also was the absolute sovereign right of a state to make the final decision. Gromyko remembered the Secretary’s statement that an individual should have the last word. There was no super-national authority which could make these decisions. It was the sovereign state that would make the final decision. No other position was possible. The last word belonged to the state. There was no scope for a collision of views if an objective view were taken.

The Secretary returned to Gromyko's statement that the last word belonged to the state. This wasn't right; the last word belonged to the individual wishing to emigrate. In the U.S. view it was very important for an individual to have the capacity to express himself. On the scale of values, this principle stood very high. The individual should have the last word regardless of where he or she lived. If Gromyko had nothing to add to this subject, perhaps U.S. and Soviet representatives at the Madrid meeting could meet to discuss this issue.

Gromyko stated that the last word was not with the individual. There were cases where an individual was engaged in secret or top secret work. Every state had the right not to allow such people to leave the country. This was an inalienable [\[Page 747\]](#) right of the state. (Gromyko repeated inalienable right in English.) The Soviet Union had the right to do it. Gromyko remembered cases where an individual was held back, but then after awhile was allowed to depart. The last word was not with the individual, he repeated.

The Secretary replied that much depended on each individual case. The above conditions did not affect many people. An individual had rights over his life and for the most part could come and go as he wished. The U.S. did not have the problem that the Soviets faced. The Secretary remembered a slogan he saw abroad "Yankee go home and take me with you." He added that the annual in-flow of people into the United States from all over the world was considerable. As for the 15 individuals involved, he did not think they were involved in top secret work and if U.S.-Soviet relations were to improve, such cases would have to be handled differently. Any positive action taken by the Soviet Union would improve the atmosphere that had gotten worse, as Gromyko had noted earlier.

Gromyko admitted that there was only a small percentage of people involved in secret work who wanted to leave. He pointed out that many people were allowed to leave the Soviet Union during the last few years. Dobrynin added that the number was well over 100,000. Gromyko continued to say that Shultz seemed to believe that many Soviet people wanted to leave, but very often these were people who are making much noise about it, had the time to write and in general were making a nuisance of themselves. There were even cases where a person was said by the U.S. to be anxious to leave, but when asked, the answer was "no, I don't want to leave, only my relatives abroad want me to come". (Gromyko instructed his interpreter to render the above passage "with feeling".)

The Secretary then mentioned the case of Professor McClellan's wife, who had been waiting for eight years to come to the U.S. Gromyko said he was unfamiliar with the case, but promised to look into it and Korniyenko added that he was familiar with the case. *The Secretary* asked whether the two CSCE negotiators would want to meet and discuss these issues. Ambassador Kampelman would be ready to discuss these matters.

Gromyko said that these questions did not require a special meeting, but that he would support the idea of having a meeting to discuss the Madrid CSCE sessions and he was sure that, if Kampelman raised human rights questions, the Soviet representative would be prepared to listen. At the same time, Gromyko wanted to avail himself of the opportunity to object vehemently to an unusual move by the U.S. side which must have been sanctioned at the very top. The Soviet Representative, Kovalev [\[Page 748\]](#) while in Madrid, had agreed to meet with Kampelman in Vienna. Upon arrival in Vienna, he discovered that Kampelman had not come. In all his experience in diplomatic affairs, Gromyko had never encountered such unacceptable behavior by a diplomat. He felt that in the future, he might have to send diplomatic notes to arrange similar meetings. He asked the Secretary to straighten this matter out, but in principle he was ready to conduct such talks at any time and at any place.

The Secretary replied that confusion about the meeting was due to a third party trying to arrange it. Austria undertook to arrange this meeting, but something went wrong. He assured Gromyko that this matter would be worked out through the two Ambassadors. Gromyko suggested that the U.S. representative should travel to Moscow on such an occasion, since his Soviet counterpart had already done his foreign travel. *The Secretary* replied that the venue and the time could be discussed by the Ambassadors. Gromyko agreed.

Gromyko then suggested that the discussion move on to regional topics such as Afghanistan, the Caribbean and Africa.

Gromyko started by saying that Afghanistan had already been discussed with the Secretary's predecessor and that he would like to only mention two aspects of the Afghanistan problem. First, there was the domestic issue concerning the regime, the leadership, the competence of the regime, its legal system and so on. Nobody had any right to interfere in these internal affairs of Afghanistan. Then there was the external aspect. The Secretary interjected that, before moving on to external affairs, he wanted to point out that Soviet troops were currently stationed in Afghanistan. Gromyko promised to take up that issue and continued to explain his view of the situation. On the external situation, armed incursions from Pakistan were taking place, and these gangs were trained mainly in Pakistan and partly in Iran. They engaged in acts of terrorism such as shooting teachers and children, and young men were forced to join these gangs. These incursions from outside amounted to a foreign aggression which was the main reason why the Afghan leadership asked the Soviet Union for assistance. This was a security issue in Afghanistan and, at the Afghan request, the Soviet Union had sent a limited number of Soviet troops. This was because the incursions from Pakistan were fighting the existing regime and government.

As for the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, Gromyko wanted the Secretary to hear from a representative of the Soviet Union that, as soon as these armed outside elements stopped fighting the present government, Soviet troops would be pulled out. There must be an effective and guaranteed end to such incursions. How could this be subject to negotiations. A pullout would be a part of an understanding between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. "We went in, and we will pull out" [Page 749] when the Afghan leadership agrees". Afghanistan would have to be an independent and non-aligned country. This was being said in the corridors of the UN. Why not support it? Why would such a position be unacceptable to the West and to Pakistan? The armed bands did not come from the moon, but from Pakistan where they were trained and armed. On the question of refugees, real refugees could return to Afghanistan without any difficulty, and there were special laws dealing with such refugees. There was, of course, a small group of formerly privileged people from Afghanistan who would have to seek refuge elsewhere. Lastly, meetings to be held in Geneva through the good offices of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, between Afghan and Pakistani representatives, would have Soviet support. The U.S. had good relations with Pakistan and the Soviet Union was not against Pakistan; it was only concerned that Pakistan was a base for incursions into Afghanistan. Afghanistan also wanted to improve relations with Pakistan, and they had some border questions to discuss. They should talk —that was the Soviet position. An improvement of the situation in that region also would help U.S.-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union found it impossible to maintain any other position. "This is a door to the Soviet Union, this is a neighboring border state. That's what it is."

The Secretary replied that his view of the diplomatic and military history differed sharply from Gromyko's. Men were fighting in Afghanistan because armed forces of another country were dominating the government in Afghanistan. There were incursions because foreign forces were stationed in Afghanistan and tried to control that country. The Secretary also wanted to add a phrase to Gromyko's proposal for an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. The phrase would be, "a government freely chosen by the Afghan people." The presence of foreign troops in that country would make free choice impossible. The removal of Soviet occupation was the key to the question. The Secretary was glad to hear that there would be talks in Geneva and he hoped that a resolution would also positively affect U.S.-Soviet relations. He added that in the past, the Afghan government had not looked ideal to the U.S. and it was friendly to the Soviet Union; but the U.S. did not object. Now the U.S. and many countries at the UN objected to the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and believed that fighting in that country was also bad for the Soviet Union. He also mentioned that the recent talks between Ambassador Hartman and the Soviet representative in Moscow had not been productive. Another round could take place and the U.S. side was ready to continue such discussions. The Secretary concluded that his views on the history of that country differed from Gromyko's, but that the U.S. would welcome any positive outcome of the talks in Geneva.

Gromyko agreed that their assessment of the history and of the actual situation in Afghanistan was different. He too [Page 750] would like to see progress in Geneva and if the U.S. could take a positive view, this could occur.

The Secretary then proposed to discuss the Caribbean area, including Central America. The buildup of arms in Nicaragua was far beyond its needs and the flow of arms to other Central American states was disruptive to the stability of that region. Elections had been held in El Salvador showing a very high turn-out by the population in spite of efforts by armed guerrillas to stop people from participating. That country needed stability which would then lead to economic development. It needed a chance. The problem in Central America was to foster economic development, which the U.S. supported, but now such development was hindered by armed intervention, through channels leading through Nicaragua, and by arms deliveries from Cuba and other countries. However, the origin of these arms was the Soviet Union. In particular, as the Secretary had mentioned last week, the emergence of jet fighters, or for that matter, armed Cuban forces in Nicaragua was unacceptable to the United States. Nations of Central America wanted stability and were willing to work with the United States. The massive buildup of arms was disruptive and causing a great deal of concern to the United States. Cuba appeared to be involved in that area and so was the Soviet Union by delivering arms. Because of Soviet involvement we were interested in Gromyko's view.

Gromyko replied that his country was watching the Caribbean area and Central America and agreed that at times this was an unquiet, even tense part of the world. But the tensions were not generated by Cuba and very little Nicaragua; these were little Latin American countries facing the United States, which was a big country. Gromyko could not agree that these forces could be disruptive, but he knew of U.S. accusations leveled at Cuba. Also, Nicaragua seemed to be appearing more and more frequently in the Washington lexicon. The notion that Cuba or Nicaragua was a danger to the United States could not be taken seriously. No world leader could seriously believe such accusations. In fact, all this was unbelievable. Cuba did have some Soviet arms, but not much because Cuba cannot afford much. There were minimal amounts of weapons sent to Nicaragua for its own security purposes. Gromyko felt that U.S. information was not very good and that some of the accusations could not be treated seriously. Business was bad for U.S. foreign policy in El Salvador, he continued, but not because of Cuba and Nicaragua; rather, it was because of the way the people of that country lived. There were some groups of people there—Gromyko was sure that the Secretary would understand his thoughts without going into detail. As for Nicaragua, this was a new country to the Soviet Union, but it was of no danger to the United States and had no evil intentions towards the United States. He [Page 751] assured the Secretary that the U.S. could sleep peacefully because no problems would come her way from these quarters. The idea that Soviet influence and Soviet arms in that area presented a danger to the U.S. could not be taken seriously. The Soviet Union would need a very long arm to reach that area, and it had no plans and no desire to do so. The Soviet Union wanted Cuba and Nicaragua to have good relations with the United States, and they in turn wanted to establish good relations with the United States. However, the U.S. responded to these overtures by a blockade, ostracism and isolation. Was this good for U.S. policy? Everyone had the right to feel sympathy or antipathy towards somebody. Even during the American Revolution, people had different sympathies. It would be best for the U.S. to remain calm, but instead the U.S. was about to start a radio propaganda war against Cuba. The Soviet Union felt that this was unnecessary, that it would be better for the U.S. to remain cool in evaluating the situation. As a big country, the U.S. could inject a calming and moderating influence into that region and cool hot tempers. The U.S. as a big power could afford to do it without any harm to its foreign policy and prestige.

The Secretary replied that he was very disappointed in Gromyko's response. It was ridiculous to think that the U.S. was trying to stir-up problems in that area. The problem was that arms were flowing from Nicaragua down to Costa Rica, Honduras and other countries. This flow of arms and of military advisers should be stopped to give these countries a chance for stability and for development. Without going into detail, the Secretary found the situation in the area very troublesome, but the U.S. was ready to defend its interests there.

Gromyko replied that he had heard a similar approach from the Secretary's predecessor, namely that Nicaragua was receiving a flow of arms, of Cuban advisors, etc. He tried to verify this information by checking with the Cubans and found that Haig's information was incorrect, to put it mildly. There were Cuban teachers and medical personnel, but there were no military advisers. The idea that Cuba had plans to interfere in Nicaragua was simply hard to believe. He said that the Soviet Union had enjoyed good relations with Cuba for a number of years. Nicaragua was a new country to the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union felt sympathy for the Nicaraguan people. Gromyko was sure that the Secretary knew the clique, or whatever he wished to call

them, who were earlier in power in that country. He wanted to stress again that the stories about military advisers and other schemes and plans in that area were pure inventions. Gromyko was not saying this to give the Secretary a false feeling of security. The Soviet Union was not that naive.

The Secretary said he was glad to hear Gromyko's assurances, but the information available to him pointed to large [Page 752] volumes of arms, with indications of where they were going. There was no doubt about it and there were also groups disruptive of existing governments. This was a very unpleasant and unacceptable situation. He did not know what the Cubans told Gromyko. Gromyko said there were some people from Cuba in Nicaragua, but they were medical personnel and teachers, and not military people as the Secretary had implied. The Secretary said that even if it were as Gromyko had said, the presence of combat troops or jet planes would be unacceptable. Gromyko asked for confirmation that the Secretary had said "jet planes," and both interpreters confirmed that he had. Gromyko then asked if this statement referred to a present or a hypothetical situation. (The Secretary did not respond directly to this question.)

The Secretary then turned to Africa, saying that he hoped that perhaps something constructive could be done. Gromyko replied that what was needed, first of all, was an independent Namibian state. South Africa had no right to be there, it contradicted certain UN Resolutions. Second, South Africa also would have to stop aggression against Angola, especially using Namibian territory. The whole world could see the raids and aggression by South Africa. Third, aid to some groups such as UNITA, in Angola, which fight against the present government, would have to stop. Gromyko knew that there were Cuban troops in Angola. This was a situation analogous to Afghanistan because the presence of Cuban troops in Angola was not the cause but the effect of South African aggression. If these causes were removed, then Cuban troops would also be removed. Gromyko said that he and the Secretary had talked to the Angolans, and both knew their position. Gromyko knew what the Angolans thought about the region and what they thought about Cuban troops. There was a joint statement by Angola and Cuba early this year on that subject. Gromyko thought that earlier the U.S. had been interested in talking to the Soviet Union about this issue. However, lately he had noticed a certain waning of interest on the part of the U.S. The Soviet Union was ready to keep up contacts with other countries trying to resolve the Angolan question without interfering in its internal affairs. Gromyko said that Crocker's meeting with Soviet representatives was only informative. As for the Group of Five any U.S.-Soviet talks had nothing to do with the creation of the Group of Five; they sort of formed themselves. He believed that the relevant UN Resolutions would be a good basis for a general solution. He was sure that more contacts were needed between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and also some other countries, to resolve the issue.

The Secretary welcomed the statement about contacts. As for the Contact Group, he said that their work was in line with UN interests and that they were attempting to bring about independence and free elections in Namibia. These were [Page 753] complicated talks involving South Africa, but they seemed to be going fairly well. At this point, there was no certainty of having an election with UN presence. The impediment now was the lack of operational plans for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola connected to the South African pullout from Namibia. More was needed than just general statements. A program for assurances was needed that provided for Cuban troop withdrawal if Namibia gained independence. Without such assurances, little could be done. Even if it were not connected with talks about Namibian independence, some parallel action was still needed. The hurdle remained: how would Cubans leave Angola? The U.S. side was working to resolve this issue, and the Secretary hoped that Gromyko would also use his influence to bring about a solution. The Secretary said that this might be an area where the two powers could do something constructive together. He repeated that the USSR had influence and that the U.S. was willing to cooperate. The neighboring states also wanted to see an independent Namibia. The Secretary thought it possible to have parallel efforts in this direction. He agreed that the meeting between Crocker and the Soviet representative was mainly informative. As for additional points of contact suggested by Gromyko, the Secretary thought that Crocker and Ambassador Hartman should arrange for another meeting to share ideas and see whether some parallel actions could be taken as initiated. He wanted to include Ambassador Hartman because he was familiar with the subject and could play an important role if events should take a more constructive turn.

As for Angola, the Secretary believed that this nation needed a national reconciliation but that the Angolans would have to work this out themselves. The presence of foreign forces was a burden to the local economy; at a time when the Angolans needed development, the less they spent on arms, the more would be left for development.

Gromyko suggested that representatives from each side should agree on the date and place for consultations and do this roughly within a month or a month-and-a-half. In essence, the Soviet Union wanted to see this matter resolved, and he knew that Angola and Cuba also wanted a resolution, but on a just basis. This would involve an independent Namibia, no aid to those against the present Angolan regime, and no South African aggression against Angola. As for Cuban troops, if the above could be resolved, then it would not be difficult for Angola and Cuba to resolve the rest. As for the Contact Group, Gromyko said that the USSR was not bound by it. The Soviet Union and the U.S. should consult bilaterally and then inform others later of the results. The Secretary said that he did not object to this proposal. He would be prepared to have a meeting within a month and would leave it up to Hartman and Crocker to decide on the time and the place.

Gromyko then moved on to nuclear non-proliferation. He wanted the Secretary to know that the Soviet Union was [Page 754] an unconditional supporter of the non-proliferation treaty. More work by the Soviet Union and the U.S. was necessary to widen the circle of participants because not as many countries had joined as had been envisaged, and it was necessary to watch this agreement very closely because there were loopholes in it. Gromyko was glad that the Secretary was showing interest in this matter. It had come to his attention that there were certain circles in the United States advocating other ways of resolving the problem without supporting the original agreement. He did not want to believe it, and he was glad to hear that that was but a rumor. If the U.S. was firmly supporting the non-proliferation agreement and its provisions, the Soviet Union would act accordingly.

The Secretary said that the U.S. was ready to subscribe to these principles and also felt genuine concern about necessary vigilance and the need to close any loopholes in the NPT. He also assured Gromyko of continuing U.S. support for the IAEA, but had to register his distress over the vote on Israel. He was against the politicizing of this group. He was distressed at what had happened in Vienna recently. This agency was very valuable and should not be politicized. As for contacts on non-proliferation issues, the Secretary informed Gromyko that the U.S. had recently appointed Mr. Richard Kennedy to deal with these matters full-time. The Secretary said that it might be constructive to have meetings in Washington or Moscow or in some other place to establish a quiet pattern of work in this area. He believed that the interests of the two powers were close on this issue, so constructive work should be possible.

Gromyko thought it possible for the representatives to meet and to look at the strict implementation of the NPT. The date and place could be arranged later. The Secretary added that their Ambassadors could be helpful in such an endeavor.

In summing up, Gromyko said that the two parties had discussed issues from the top downwards. He wanted to close on a note stressed by Brezhnev and himself at the UNGA—that the USSR would like normal relations with the United States, but on the basis of respect for its legitimate interests. Nobody should be allowed to disturb the balance in the world and therefore the sides started with START and INF in Europe, questions of exceptional importance. Gromyko was sure that the U.S. was familiar with Soviet proposals presented early on and during the present UNGA session. He wanted to stress statements made by the Soviet Union in a unilateral way about no-first-use of nuclear weapons and hoped that the U.S. would act in a similar manner. He would not expect an answer at this point, but since the U.S. was familiar with the Soviet position, he would ask the Secretary to study it without bias or prejudice.

The Secretary wanted to make a few comments in a similar spirit. As for the last question, the Secretary pointed out [Page 755] that no-first-use of any kind of weapon was a posture maintained by NATO and by the U.S. This meant no aggression with any weapon. This matter should be looked at in a comprehensive manner. As for arms reductions, the Secretary knew of the professional attitude and the businesslike manner in which the negotiations were working in Geneva and this applied to both U.S. and Soviet negotiators. The Secretary mentioned this in his UNGA speech⁶ and, although many issues still divided the two sides and it was impossible to predict the outcome, he was glad to observe that the negotiations were conducted in a

businesslike way and would hope that Gromyko would share his view. As for the overall picture, some U.S. and Soviet views were not dissimilar, but the main question remained, namely, what kind of relationship would the super-powers have? This was important to the U.S. and the USSR and to the whole world. Relations could be more constructive than they were in the past or continue to remain as they were. The U.S. was prepared to defend its interests, but would prefer to move to more constructive relations between the two powers.

To sum up the second session, the areas of possible cooperation appeared to be South Africa and non-proliferation. Finally, the Secretary stressed again the importance that the U.S. placed on the question of human rights and asked Gromyko again to look at the list of 15 names presented by Ambassador Hartman in the first meeting.

In closing, Gromyko replied that he too appreciated the businesslike atmosphere of these discussions and, as for any announcements or statements, each side was free to say whatever it saw fit, but that the Soviet side would want to reserve the right to announce necessary corrections if some distorted views of the talks were to appear. He felt that these talks were of a closed and private nature. *The Secretary* suggested that the spokesmen for each side should work out a suitable text.

Over refreshments, the Secretary and Gromyko discussed the possibility of a further meeting prior to next year's UNGA, and the two agreed to see how events went in coming months.

1. Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S-I Records, Memoranda of Conversations Pertaining to United States and USSR Relations, 1981–1990, Lot 93D188, Shultz/Gromyko UN Sept–Oct 82 BMCK 1982 Geneva. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations.¹

2. See Reagan's "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East," September 1, 1982, *Public Papers: Reagan, 1982*, Vol. II, pp. 1093–1097.²

3. Reference is to the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps in the aftermath of the assassination of Bashir Gemayel on September 14.³

4. Reference is to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.⁴

5. Not further identified.⁵

6. Shultz's September 30 speech is printed in the Department of State *Bulletin*, November 1982, pp. 1–9.⁶